



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF CONTRACTORS' SELECTION CRITERIA INFLUENCING PROJECT DELIVERY STRATEGY IN MDAs AND LGAs IN RIVERS STATE

Owabie Kennedy Echendu, E. C. Ubani, Emmanuel C. Nwadike, M.I. Nmecha

Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards,
Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the influence of contractors' selection criteria on project delivery strategies in Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study focused on contractor experience, financial capability, technical competence, past performance, and regulatory compliance as determinants of effective project delivery. A descriptive–correlational research design was adopted. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 121 procurement officers, project managers, consultants, and other public procurement stakeholders across MDAs and LGAs. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used for analysis. Findings revealed that contractor experience (M = 4.10), financial capability (M = 4.03), technical competence (M = 3.95), past performance (M = 3.95), and regulatory compliance (M = 3.96) significantly influenced project delivery effectiveness. The study established positive correlations between contractor selection criteria and project delivery outcomes including timeliness, quality, cost efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction. The findings further demonstrated that transparent and merit-based procurement systems improve accountability and reduce project abandonment. The study concluded that rigorous contractor evaluation frameworks are essential for sustainable infrastructure development in Rivers State. It recommended stricter enforcement of procurement regulations, institutionalized contractor performance monitoring systems, and prioritization of technical competence and financial stability during contract award processes.

Keywords: Contractor selection, project delivery strategy, procurement management, regulatory compliance, technical competence, public procurement

Corresponding Author

Owabie Kennedy Echendu

E-mail Address: ecubani1222@gmail.com

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Public procurement constitutes a principal mechanism for the facilitation of economic growth and infrastructure provision in developing economies (Kyalo, 2024). In Nigeria, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Areas bear the responsibility for the implementation of critical public infrastructure projects, such as roads, schools, hospitals, and water facilities (Rasul & Rogger, 2016, p. 419). Despite significant budgetary allocations, many public projects frequently fail to achieve their anticipated objectives, attributable to delays, cost overruns, substandard quality, and project abandonment (Eja & Ramegowda, 2019; Ongbali et al., 2021). Scholars have linked these failures to weak contractor selection systems and inappropriate project delivery strategies (Jimoh et al., 2016, p. 1098; Nweze, 2016, p. 38).

Contractor selection criteria constitute the established parameters for determining contractor suitability for project execution (Hatush & Skitmore, 1997). These include financial capability, technical competence, contractor experience, regulatory compliance, and past performance (Alkaabi & Mahjoob, 2023, p. 137; H. et al., 2018, p. 4). The efficacy of project delivery strategies, encompassing Design-Bid-Build, Design and Build, Public-Private Partnerships, and Construction Management at Risk, largely depends on the caliber of contractors chosen for implementation (Aje, 2012; Liu et al., 2015). The proliferation of abandoned projects and substandard infrastructure has raised concerns regarding procurement practices within MDAs and LGAs (Abdul et al., 2018, p. 6; Ogunnusi et al., 2021). Consequently, this inquiry endeavors to examine how contractor selection criteria may influence project delivery strategies and subsequent outcomes within Rivers State.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research highlights the pivotal role of effective contractor selection in the attainment of successful project outcomes (Malaeb et al., 2023, p. 278). For instance, Adejoh et al. found that financial capability, technical competence, and experience may significantly influence the delivery of projects in Abuja (Adejoh et al., 2023). Similarly, Okereke and Nwine identified that contractor experience and financial stability often serve as critical predictors of success in Rivers State road construction projects (Okereke & Nwine, 2025), while regulatory compliance and past performance tend to be vital for enhancing completion rates in housing projects in Nigeria (Akinrinade et al., 2025; Sullivan & Savicky, 2010).

This study is grounded in the Principal-Agent Theory, which often serves to elucidate the relationship between government institutions and contractors by emphasizing the importance of accountability and monitoring mechanisms to mitigate information asymmetry and agency risks (Neupane et al., 2014, p. 6). Complementing this, Contingency Theory posits that project delivery strategies typically necessitate alignment with specific contextual realities, such as project complexity and contractor capability (Boonstra & Reezigt, 2023, p. 255).

Empirical evidence tends to suggest that contractors possessing robust financial capacity may be less prone to project abandonment (Daier et al., 2022, p. 5). Furthermore, technical competence often appears essential for adherence to quality standards (Abebe & Tsehayae, 2024, p. 1455), while past performance frequently serves as a reliable indicator of efficiency (Sullivan & Savicky, 2010). Regulatory compliance, in turn, often contributes to mitigating the risk of legal disputes and project failure (Latilo et al., 2024, p. 1871). Despite these established links, research focusing specifically on Rivers State MDAs and LGAs remains limited, representing a gap that this study addresses.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, a methodological approach. The target population comprised procurement officers, project managers, consultants, contractors, and other pertinent stakeholders engaged in public procurement processes within Rivers State. Utilizing Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 121 respondents was selected from a total population of 173 stakeholders.

Primary data collection was conducted via structured questionnaires, which were divided into sections on demographic information, contractor selection criteria, and project delivery outcomes. Participant responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Throughout the study, ethical considerations— confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent—were strictly maintained.



Map of Rivers State (Source: Google)



4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presentation of Results

Demographic analysis indicated a majority of respondents with substantial experience in procurement and project management, with a majority of these individuals actively engaged in public infrastructure delivery within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Descriptive analysis elucidated the importance of contractor selection criteria. With a mean score of 4.10, contractor experience is a principal determinant of efficient resource management and timely delivery. Financial capability demonstrated an association with the ability to procure quality materials and sustain project activities, while technical competence underscored the necessity of skilled personnel, contemporary equipment, and strict adherence to established engineering standards. Furthermore, regulatory compliance and past performance were observed to be integral factors.

Correlation analysis suggested statistically significant positive relationships between all contractor selection criteria and project delivery outcomes. Specifically, contractor experience correlated robustly with timely project completion; Furthermore, financial capability appeared to exert considerable influence on project sustainability and the reducing abandonment rates. Concurrently, technical competence improved quality outcomes and ensured adherence to specifications, while prior performance and regulatory compliance proved instrumental in mitigating project risks and enhancing transparency and accountability. These findings suggest that procurement systems that emphasize objective contractor evaluation may significantly contribute to efficient project delivery strategies within the public sector.

The study examined how contractors' selection criteria influence project delivery strategies in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings suggest that contractor experience, financial capability, technical competence, past performance, and regulatory compliance may significantly enhance project delivery outcomes, including timeliness, quality, accountability, and cost efficiency. Respondents strongly agreed that experienced contractors optimize resource allocation; financially stable contractors mitigate the incidence of project abandonment; technically competent firms elevate quality standards; and regulatory compliance fosters enhanced transparency and accountability in project execution. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis, moreover, indicated statistically significant positive relationships between all contractor selection criteria and project delivery outcomes, leading to the potential rejection of all null hypotheses. Consequently, this study posits that transparent and merit-based contractor selection frameworks appear instrumental for improving public infrastructure delivery in Rivers State.



Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Variables	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Contractor Experience and Project Delivery Outcomes	4.10	0.45
Financial Capability and Project Delivery Outcomes	4.03	0.51
Technical Competence and Project Delivery Outcomes	3.95	0.54
Past Contractor Performance and Project Delivery Outcomes	3.95	0.56
Regulatory Compliance and Project Delivery Outcomes	3.96	0.52

Source: Authors’ Analysis (2025).

Interpretation: Contractor experience exhibited the highest mean score (4.10); this outcome suggests a perception among respondents regarding its prominent influence on successful project delivery.

Table 2: Correlation Results between Selection Criteria and Project Delivery Outcomes

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Contractor Experience vs Project Delivery	0.630	0.000	Significant
Financial Capability vs Project Delivery	0.580	0.000	Significant
Technical Competence vs Project Delivery	0.550	0.001	Significant
Past Performance vs Project Delivery	0.610	0.000	Significant
Regulatory Compliance vs Project Delivery	0.490	0.003	Significant

Source: Authors’ Analysis (2025).

Interpretation: All variables showed significant positive relationships with project delivery outcomes at $p < 0.05$, thereby suggesting that the implementation of effective contractor selection criteria may enhance public project delivery performance.

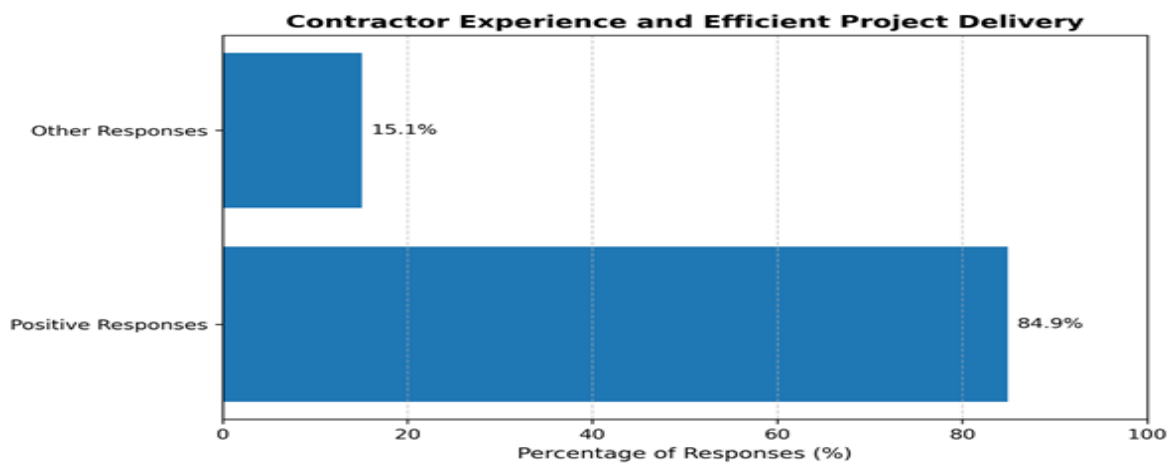


Figure 1: Contractor Experience and Efficient Project Delivery

- 84.9% of respondents indicate that contractors with extensive industry experience tend to facilitate more efficient project delivery.

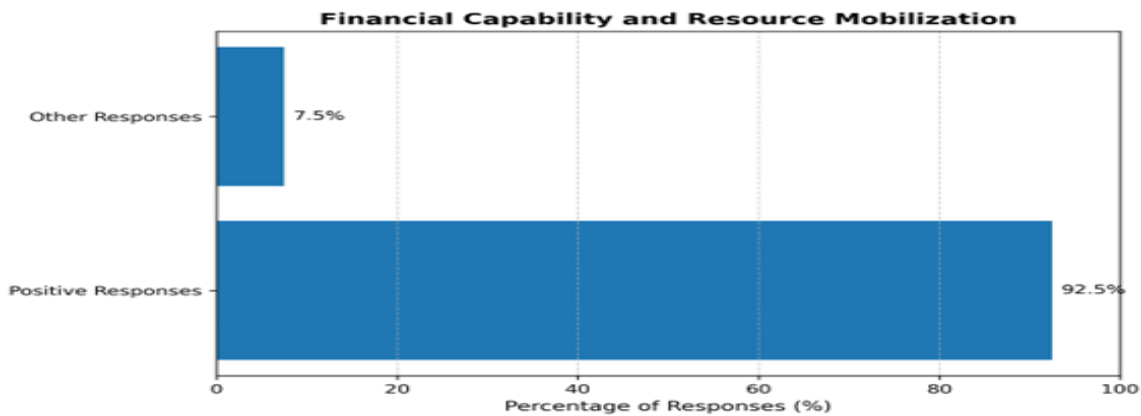


Figure 2: Financial Capability and Resource Mobilization

- 92.5% of respondents agree that financially robust contractors facilitate the prompt mobilization of project resources.

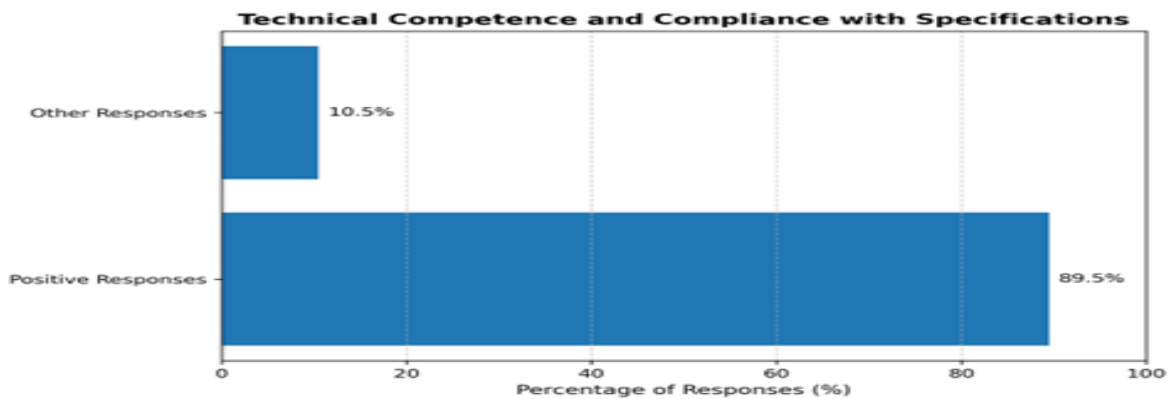


Figure 3: Technical Competence and Compliance with Specifications

- The data indicate that 89.5% of respondents report that technically competent contractors demonstrate a higher degree of compliance with project specifications.

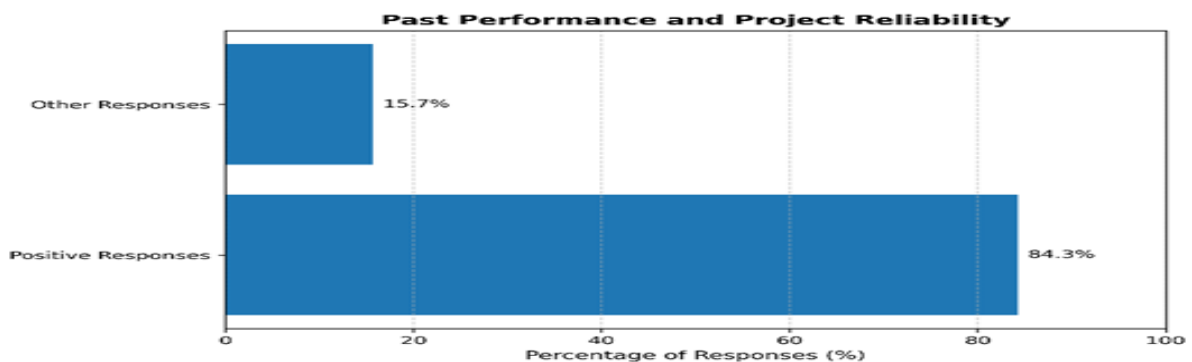


Figure 4: Past Performance and Project Reliability

- 84.3% of respondents posit that the systematic review of past contractor performance may serve as an effective predictor of future project reliability.

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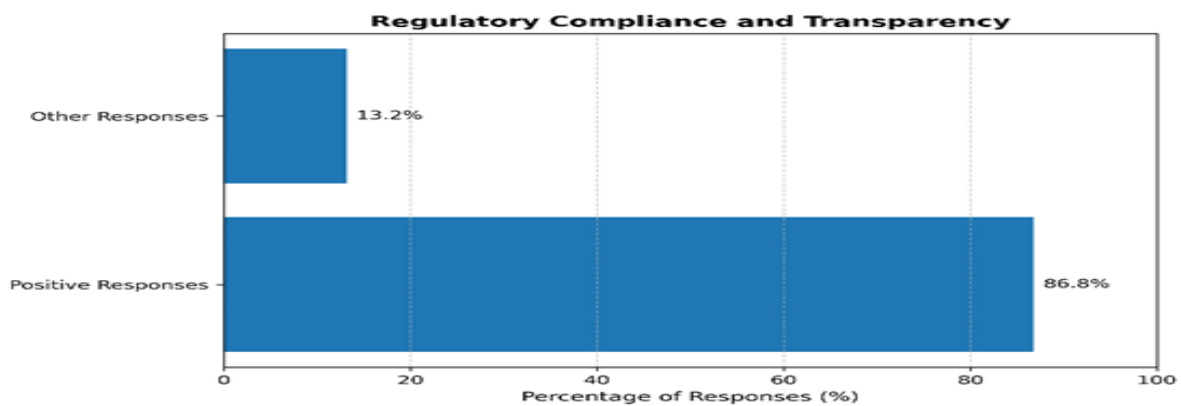


Figure 5: Regulatory Compliance and Transparency

- 86.8% agreed that regulatory compliance ensures transparency and accountability in project delivery.

4.2. Discussion

The study evaluated the influence of contractor selection criteria on project delivery outcomes across Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. Descriptive and inferential analyses may suggest that contractor experience, financial capability, technical competence, past performance, and regulatory compliance influence the effectiveness of public project delivery. Respondents generally agreed that experienced contractors appear to possess a superior ability to manage risks, coordinate resources, and maintain project schedules. Notably, contractor experience received the highest mean score, potentially underscoring its dominant role in project outcomes—a finding supported by a strong positive correlation in the Pearson Product Moment analysis.

Financial capability emerged as another critical determinant of project success. The findings suggest that financially stable contractors are better equipped to mobilize resources promptly, settle obligations with suppliers and workers, and mitigate the risk of project abandonment. Given the statistically significant positive correlation between financial capability and delivery outcomes, maintaining liquidity and access to capital may be essential for sustainable public sector execution.

Similarly, technical competence appears to be a major predictor of project success. Contractors leveraging skilled personnel, modern equipment, and advanced construction methodologies consistently delivered higher-quality work, more closely aligned with technical specifications and safety standards (Mean = 3.95). These results suggest that prioritizing technical expertise minimizes construction defects while enhancing operational efficiency in project implementation.



Furthermore, the study suggests that past performance is a significant indicator of future reliability. Contractors with strong track records were perceived as more capable of upholding quality standards and adhering to project timelines. The positive correlation between past performance and delivery outcomes may highlight the strategic importance of integrating performance history into procurement evaluation systems to enhance accountability and mitigate potential risks.

Regulatory compliance was also identified as a significant factor influencing project success. Adherence to procurement regulations, licensing requirements, and ethical standards was shown to foster transparency, improve accountability, and reduce project disputes (Mean = 3.96). These results suggest that strengthening compliance mechanisms within Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Areas (LGAs) is vital for improving governance and ensuring infrastructure sustainability.

Ultimately, the study suggests that effective contractor selection frameworks are fundamental to public infrastructure delivery in Rivers State. The findings often indicate that transparent, merit-based, and performance-driven systems improve project quality, timeliness, cost efficiency, and accountability. Consequently, this study recommends the adoption of standardized evaluation frameworks that prioritize experience, financial strength, technical competence, past performance, and regulatory compliance, as essential benchmarks for contractor selection in public procurement.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study evaluated the impact of contractor selection criteria on project delivery outcomes within Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings establish that contractor experience, financial capability, technical competence, past performance, and regulatory compliance notably influence project delivery effectiveness.

The research posits that transparent, merit-based contractor evaluation systems appear essential for achieving timely, cost-effective, and high-quality project outcomes. Conversely, procurement systems undermined by favoritism, political interference, and inadequate vetting contribute to suboptimal infrastructure delivery and project abandonment. Therefore, it is posited that the strengthening of procurement institutions and the enforcement of objective contractor selection frameworks are crucial for achieving sustainable development.



5.2. Recommendations

1. **Institutionalize Standardized Evaluation Frameworks:** MDAs and LGAs should implement robust contractor evaluation frameworks that prioritize technical competence, financial capability, and past performance as core selection criteria.
2. **Enhance Regulatory Monitoring:** Procurement regulatory agencies, although operating under resource constraints, must strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure strict compliance with established procurement laws and ethical standards.
3. **Prioritize Capacity Building:** Government institutions should focus on professional development for procurement officers and project managers to enhance their expertise in managing public projects.
4. **Develop Performance Databases:** A centralized contractor performance database should be established to track delivery records, facilitating evidence-based and informed future procurement decisions.
5. **Mitigate Political Interference:** Procurement processes must be safeguarded against political interference through the implementation of transparent, merit-based, and highly accountable selection procedures.

However, integrating the outlined strategic improvements will help address the recurring challenges of project abandonment and inefficient resource allocation, ultimately ensuring that public infrastructure investments yield optimal value for money (Adejoh et al., 2023; Jimoh et al., 2016, p. 1110).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

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